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AUTHOR Mosher, Deborah J.
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ABSTRACT

A program was designed and implemented to improve vocabulary knowledge and attitudes toward reading by focusing on direct vocabulary instruction. The targeted population consisted of 23 fourth grade students in a middle-class suburb north of Chicago. The community is very multicultural, so many of the students speak English as a second language. The problems of poor reading comprehension and lack of vocabulary knowledge were documented through data collected from standardized tests, IGAP scores, and teacher assessment of student performance. Results of analysis of probable cause data indicated that students lack exposure and knowledge of vocabulary and also lack strategies to learn new words. In addition, students did not have sufficient time to free read during the day and to participate in read-aloud sessions with the teacher. Reviews of instructional strategies indicated an overemphasis on definitions as a method of teaching new vocabulary. A review of solution strategies suggested by literature and an analysis of the problem setting resulted in the selection of the following intervention strategies. Teacher directed vocabulary instruction activities will take place on a daily basis, and students will be responsible for individual vocabulary activities. There will also be an increase in time spent each day on silent reading and teacher read-aloud activities. Post intervention data indicated a steady growth in vocabulary by the students. The majority of the students scored in the fifth stanine or above on the final vocabulary test. Providing more silent reading time on a daily basis and providing read aloud time by the teacher also resulted in students' attitudes improving. Contains 26 references and 9 figures of data. Appendixes contain a reading attitudes survey, sample word lists, a sample sheet for vocabulary cards, and a vocabulary worksheet. (Author/SR)

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IMPROVING VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE AND READING ATTITUDES IN 4TH GRADE STUDENTS THROUGH DIRECT VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

Deborah J. Mosher

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This project was approved by

Dr. Susan L. Moore
Advisor

Dr. Donna Burn
Advisor

Dr. Beverly Gulley
Dean, School of Education

ABSTRACT

Author: Deborah J. Mosher

A program was designed and implemented to improve vocabulary knowledge and attitudes toward reading by focusing on direct vocabulary instruction. The targeted population consists of 23 4th grade students in a middle-class suburb north of Chicago. The community is very multicultural so many of the students speak English as a second language. The problems of poor reading comprehension and lack of vocabulary knowledge were documented through data collected from standardized tests, IGAP scores, and teacher assessment of student performance.

Results of analysis of probable cause data indicated that students lack exposure and knowledge of vocabulary and also lack strategies to learn new words. In addition, students did not have sufficient time to free read during the day and to participate in read-aloud sessions with the teacher. Reviews of instructional strategies indicate an over emphasis on definitions as a method of teaching new vocabulary.

A review of solution strategies suggested by literature and an analysis of the problem setting resulted in the selection of the following intervention strategies. Teacher directed vocabulary instruction activities will take place on a daily basis and students will be responsible for individual vocabulary activities. There will also be an increase in time spent each day on silent reading and teacher read-aloud activities.

Post intervention data indicated that direct instruction of vocabulary, through teacher directed lessons and independent student lessons, resulted in a steady growth in vocabulary by the students. The majority of the students scored in the 5th stanine or above on the final vocabulary test. Providing more silent reading time on a daily basis and providing read aloud time by the teacher also resulted in students' attitudes improving.

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Chapter 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of Problem

Students of the targeted 4th grade elementary school population exhibited poor vocabulary knowledge which affected their reading comprehension. This, in turn, affected their attitudes toward reading. The problem of low scores in the general population have been complicated by a growing population of minority and immigrant students who speak English as a second language. Evidence for the existence of this problem includes standardized test scores, Illinois Goal Assessment Scores, teacher observations, anectodal records and other teacher assessments that indicate student achievement.

Immediate Problem Context

The school is predominately a neighborhood school with a total enrollment of 601 students consisting of first through fifth graders. The student population in the school is made up of various racial-ethnic groups. According to enrollment reports of 1997, 55.9 percent of the school's population was classified as white. Other racial-ethnic groups represented are Black students with a population of 4.7 %, Hispanic students with a population of 7.7 %, and 31.8 % are Asian/Pacific Islander students. Of the total student population, 9.8 % were identified as low-income students. In addition,14.5% of the students are limited English proficient. The school has an attendance rate of 95.6% and no chronic truancies.

The school staff consists of 42 certified teachers and 18 teaching assistants.

Caucasians make up the majority of the certified teaching staff with a percentage of 97.2 %. The remaining staff is represented by a small percentage (2.8%) of Pacific Islanders. Almost 70 % of the teaching staff has a Master's Degree or above and the teachers average 11 years of experience. A large percentage (84%) of the staff is female. The pupil-teacher ratio in the elementary school averages 19:1. The average class size is 25 students but this increases as the students are in specials. The specials offered are music, art and physical education. Class sizes in these special classes can grow to 38 students as 1 1/2 classes are often grouped together. All three special teachers have a full-time instructional assistant.

There are many programs offered to help students with special needs achieve. The special education department consists of three certified teachers and two assistants. Students are serviced either in self-contained programs, pull-out programs, in-class assistance or drop-in resource help. The English as a Second Language or ESL program has two certified teachers and one instructional assistant to help with pull-out language programs. In addition, there are numerous interpreters who are available as resources for this program. Two speech pathologists, one social worker and one part-time school psychologist are also on staff to assist students and their families. In addition, the township Intensive Development Class is housed in this building. This program services sixteen students identified as Educable Mentally Handicapped who are bused in from other township schools. These students are mainstreamed into the regular education classes as ability permits.

Programs are also in place to help students with academic achievement. Reading Recovery is a program modeled after Reading Discovery that focuses on helping low readers in the first grade. There is a reading specialist who organizes this program and four assistants who are also involved. This program has recently expanded to work with a small number of 2nd- through 5th-grade students who

continue to be at risk in reading. The Earth watch program is a gifted program with a focus on science. This program services the top one percent of third through fifth graders. After-school enrichment programs are also in place to provide children with social, physical and educational experiences.

The school was built in 1955, with three additions constructed in subsequent years. There are 32 classrooms, a gym, cafeteria, art room, music room, media center and computer lab. The computer lab houses thirty computers, some with internet access. In addition, there are five computers with television monitors on mobile carts that can be rolled into each classroom. A new addition of 36 e-mates, a type of elementary lap-top, are also available to the classrooms. The local park district owns the large field adjacent to the school and maintains the playground equipment and baseball fields.

The Surrounding Community

The school is located in a northern suburb of a large Midwestern city. The village currently has a population of 68,000 people. When this community was incorporated in 1888, it was already a destination point for a few hundred immigrants from Germany. Unlike other north shore communities, this one did not have access to transportation lines that connected with the city its growth was comparatively slow compared to other northern suburbs. There was rapid growth in the post-World War II area,and so began a steady expansion of population that was due in large part to immigration. What was formerly a farming village became home to the metropolitan area's greatest number of survivors of the Nazi holocaust in Europe. The population became more varied in the 1960s, with the arrival of more European immigrants from Germany and Poland, and from several of the major territories of the Soviet Union. This community is still a prominent first step for many immigrants from the city moving into the American suburban middle class. Today, there is an international population

that reflects the culture of recent immigration from throughout Asia, including Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan, as well as Greece, India, the former Soviet Union, and growing populations from the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Pakistan. Because of this diversity, this community is served by several religious centers as well as parochial schools. This particular community has five elementary school districts which feed into one large high school district. Because of the large number of school districts in this one community, they are all very small, ranging from one school to four schools.

The parents in this district are split between being very supportive and involved in the school and very uninvolved in the school. Much of this is cultural and language related. There are many parents that do not feel that they have the language to communicate with the school. Also, because schools are so different in other countries, many parents are not aware of their rights and obligations in this school system. The ESL staff has been working to create some type of assimilation program to welcome new families and explain their responsibilities to their child and the school.

There is a relatively small percentage of low-income families in the district, roughly 9.8%. The average family income ranges from $40,000 - $60,000. Most of the homes in the district were built before the school's construction in 1955. The average home in this district sells for approximately $175,000 and is between 40 - 55 years old.

National Context of the Problem

Vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to reading comprehension. One cannot understand text without knowing what most of the words mean. There has been a great deal of research documenting the strength of the relationship between vocabulary and comprehension. The proportion of difficult words in a text is the single most powerful predictor of text difficulty and a reader's general vocabulary knowledge is the single best predictor of how well that reader can understand text (Anderson and

Freebody 1981). Nagy (1988, p.1) contends, "A lack of adequate vocabulary knowledge is already an obvious and serious obstacle for many students, and their numbers can be expected to rise as an increasing proportion of them fall into categories considered educationally at risk. At the same time, advances in knowledge will create an ever larger pool of concepts and words that a person must master to be literate and employable." The link has been determined between general vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension.

An increasingly large population is not developing the vocabulary knowledge and reading skills necessary to be successful in all other academic areas in school. Lack of vocabulary knowledge affects other subject areas as well. In classrooms, the textbook continues to be the primary resource teachers have for science and social studies instruction. As critics observe, "texts are often conceptually dense, inconsiderate to the reader and uninteresting" (Schumm, Vaughn, and Leavell, 1994). In addition, the vocabulary presented in textbooks is often difficult and specialized. Although the opportunities for vocabulary instruction exist in reading and language arts, vocabulary instruction properly belongs in all subjects of the curriculum (Smith, 1997). Learners are being met by both new ideas and the words that represent them. Not focusing on vocabulary instruction as a part of the reading process does a disservice to the students in all curriculum areas.

All students do not enter school on equal footing. There is an increasing number of minority and immigrant students who have flooded our school systems. "By the year 2000, one in three students in American schools will be from a minority group representing diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds" (National Reading Styles Institute [NRSI], 1995). It seems predictable that these same students will struggle even more with vocabulary knowledge. The National Reading Research Center defines diverse learners as those students who have not achieved the

minimum level of literacy for their age or developmental stage. In addition, they can also be learners from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds who are often victims of inequalities in schooling (The National Reading Research Center [NRRC], 1994). Many immigrant children enter school with dissimilar background knowledge. Different cultural groups have different ways of teaching and learning and different views of what it means to teach and to learn (Anderson & Gunderson, 1997). It seems that this group of students becomes even more challenging when teaching literacy.

Low vocabulary and reading ability in students affects everyone. These same students grow up and are unable to function in society. Since this is such a crucial skill for all students in all academic areas, this study will address causes and strategies for improving reading skills by focusing on vocabulary instruction in the targeted school.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSES

Problem Evidence

The problem identified in the targeted group of students was inadequate vocabulary knowledge. Developing strong vocabulary knowledge is not an isolated part of the reading curriculum. This is directly linked to reading comprehension and a desire to read. In designing an intervention, this researcher had to determine which components of reading and vocabulary were the students' strengths and which needed improvement. To do this, two types of data were collected: results of the Gates-MacGinitie Vocabulary test and the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS).

The first form of evidence compiled was the stanine in which each child scored on the vocabulary portion of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading test. Of the students in the class, only 23 of 25 scores were graphed. The two students in special education classes with Individualized Education Programs were exempt from this testing. Stanines describe a student's level of achievement in relation to the achievement of other students in the same grade. Each unit in the stanine scale is equal except for the lowest and highest units. Stanines have a mean of 5 and a standard deviation of 2. Stanines are more useful for individual than for group scores. Data collected from this test is presented in Figure 1. Following the figure is a brief analysis of the results.

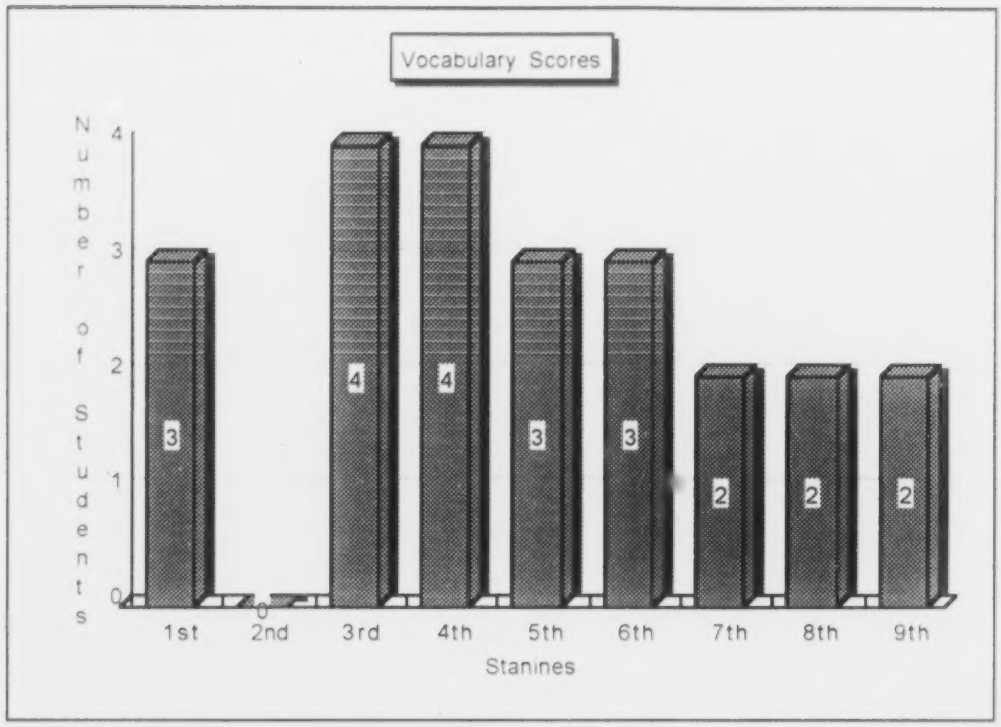

Figure 1. The number of students scoring in each stanine on the Gates-MacGinitie Vocabulary test.

As the data presented in Figure 1 illustrates, 48% of the targeted student population scored below the 5th stanine in vocabulary meaning. This percentage indicates that roughly half the students experience deficiencies in vocabulary development. The fact that 13% of the students scored in the 1st stanine indicates severe deficiencies. These results show that the targeted students have vocabularies that are limited when compared with other students of similar ages. In a normal distribution, the data should resemble a bell curve.

Research has shown that one way a strong vocabulary develops is from increased reading, both at home and at school. The next form of data collected was from the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, (Appendix A) a survey to determine how students felt about reading in three areas. The three areas defined were free reading

at home, free reading in school, and school work associated with reading class. The results are shown in Figures 2, 3 and 4.

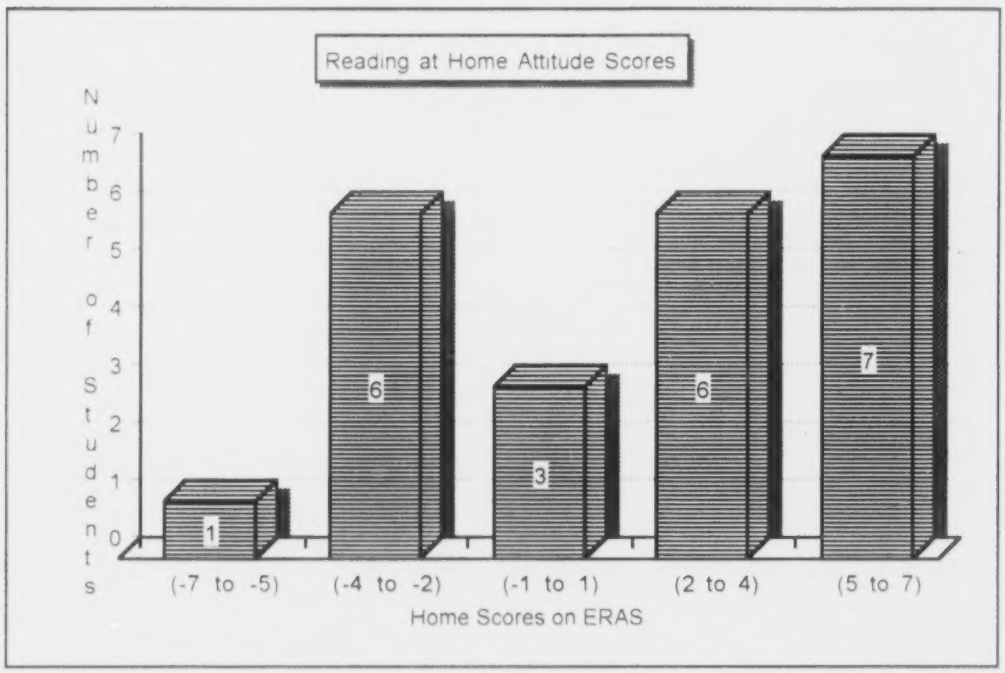

Figure 2. Number of students that scored in each range on the Home portion of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey.

Figure 2 shows that 43% of the students surveyed scored a 1 or below on this survey. This indicated that free reading at home is not something they enjoy or choose to do. Some students were adamant about their opinions, as is evidenced by the scores in the lowest range. As research has indicated, many students do not choose to read at home as they are distracted by television, video games and extra-curricular activities. Even though 56% of the students scored in the positive range of numbers, only 30% of the students seemed to truly enjoy reading at home and made time to pursue this activity.

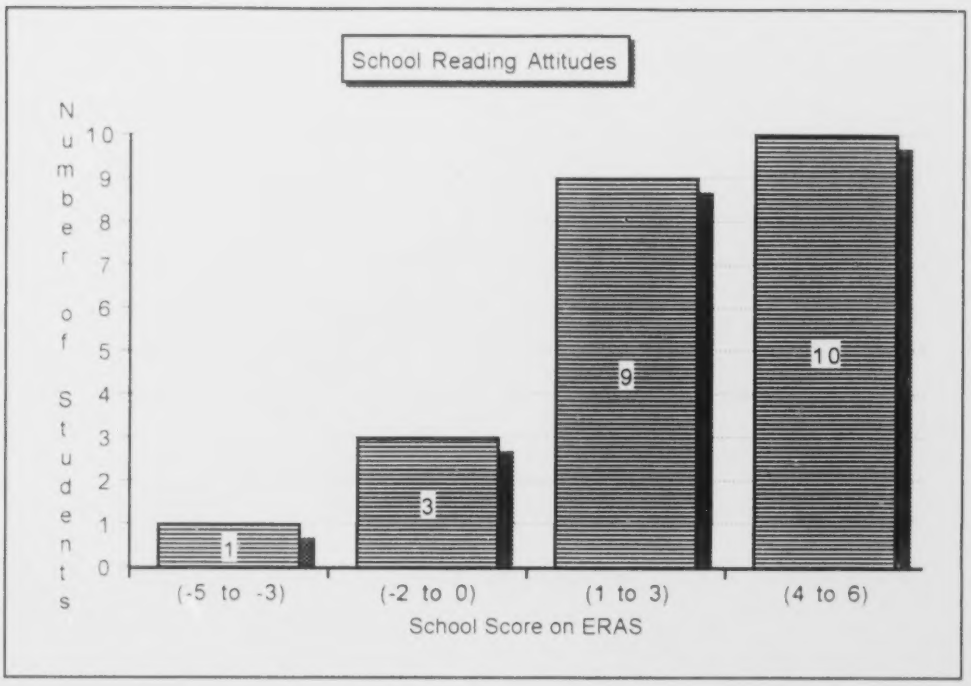

Figure 3. Number of students that scored in each range on the School portion of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey.

These results were most surprising of all. Of the targeted population of students, 82% scored in the positive range. This indicates that they not only enjoy reading in school, but would choose it over other areas of study. One problem with this type of survey is that the data can sometimes be unreliable because the students wish to please the teacher. However, it is important to note that this area of the survey did not include any work associated with reading but just the act of reading itself. It also included free reading by the students with books chosen by the students. Figure 4 will address the work aspect of reading. Looking at the results of this portion, it would indicate that the students had a positive attitude about reading in school. This varied greatly from the results of the home portion.

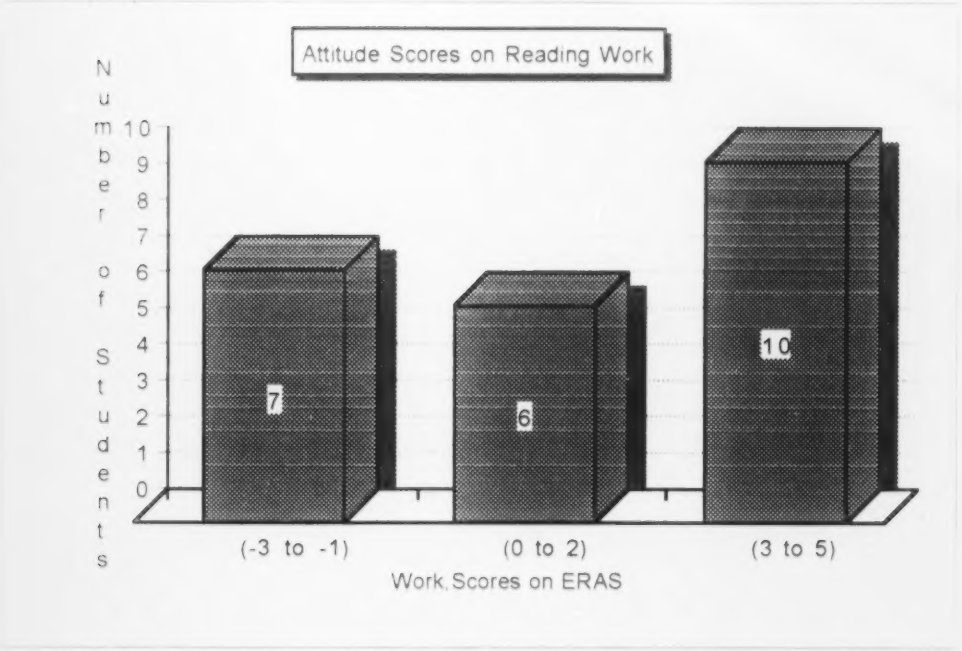

Figure 4. Number of students that scored in each range on the reading work portion of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey.

The results of this survey were least surprising. Approximately 56% of the students scored in the negative to low range regarding school work associated with reading class. While many students stated that they enjoy reading, the difficulties they encounter are usually related to the work. This is where students must show that they understand the reading material and understand the vocabulary. Students are least positive about this area because it is the most demanding. Comparing the scores of the vocabulary test and this portion of the survey, the numbers are similar. On the vocabulary test, 48% scored below the 5th stanine. Having difficulty understanding the words in reading would partially explain the 56% of students that dislike reading work.

When the data from the Gates-MacGinitie Vocabulary test and the Elementary

Reading Attitude Survey are analyzed it becomes evident that roughly half of the targeted student population experiences severe difficulties in vocabulary and in their attitudes toward reading. Research has indicated that the more a person reads, the better his/her vocabulary becomes. In planning an intervention, one that includes a focus on specific vocabulary instruction and improving attitudes toward reading would benefit these students.

Probable Cause (site based)

A wealth of research suggest several causes that may have contributed to the targeted students' difficulties in reading comprehension and specifically, vocabulary knowledge. Students in the targeted population are experiencing the same problems recognized nationally.

There are 42 languages represented in the targeted school population. This is present in a school with a population of 630 students. More than half of the students are either first generation Americans or were born in another country. It follows that most of the students speak another language at home. When families immigrated to this country, in most cases, it was only the father who was able to speak English. Since the father usually is working all day, the mother is the parent who spends the majority of time with the child. Having limited or no English skills herself can affect how proficient the child will be when learning English in school. The child spends much of his school time learning basic English and often does not have anyone to practice his English with once he gets home. In many cases, both parents work and the child is watched by a grandparent who does not speak English. It is difficult for this person to give assistance with homework and other school related matters. Age appropriate vocabulary knowledge that is required for most students can be much too difficult for the student to master. Hence, as the child gets older, he may be able to read the words but not comprehend what has been read.

Many new families to the country are hesitant about involving themselves in the community. Many parents can not drive or are unsure about driving in a city atmosphere. Therefore, many families do not travel about and explore their city. Children are not exposed to common places and events that most other children native to this area would already understand. Locations such as a grocery store, the mall, a zoo, downtown, and restaurants are examples of this. There is a great deal of specific vocabulary associated with each of these places. Students who have never experienced a trip to the zoo will have difficulty understanding words without a personal reference to the situation.

Most of the children in this population spend a great deal of time watching television and playing video games. This does seem to be a way that many families acclimate themselves to America. While this does expose children to new ideas and vocabulary, often times parents do not put limits on television viewing or help the children watch age appropriate programs. With the amount of time spent in front of a television, there seems to be very little time left for reading. Since a large percentage of new vocabulary knowledge comes from reading or being read to, students are lacking opportunities in this area. Many parents are not comfortable reading aloud in English so the student misses out on this valuable learning experience.

For many of these children, after school and weekend time is usually spent in the home and not with peers. Many families are nervous about letting their children go to someone else's home and prevent them from participating in these types of activities. When children are together, there is a great deal of talking that takes place and this can be a real learning experience for children new to this country or unfamiliar with cultural experiences here. Children seem to spend less time playing outside with friends than they may have done in the past. The more time spent isolated in the home or in front of a television means less time talking and reading and learning.

Probable Cause (literature)

Anderson and Freebody hypothesize that vocabulary knowledge is strongly related to comprehension because "understanding words enables readers to understand passages and verbal aptitude underlies both word and passage comprehension" (Anderson & Freebody, 1981, p.129). The proportion of difficult words in a text is the single most powerful predictor of text difficulty, and a reader's general vocabulary knowledge is the single best predictor of how well that reader can understand the text (Anderson & Freebody, 1981).

One possible cause for lack of vocabulary knowledge according to Levin (1990), is a shift in children's language that takes place around age 10. The words that students encounter now are more abstract rather than concrete. There are more concepts in social studies texts, more abstractions in the stories they read and specialized content words now introduced in science (Levin, 1990). Students are now required to meet the challenge of word meaning as opposed to mastering word recognition. As the reading material increases in difficulty, there will be more abstractions and content-specific vocabulary words presented. This will further increase the difficulty in both mastering the new words and comprehension of the written material.

One of the strategies that students need to improve comprehension is the ability to access prior knowledge. To construct meaning, "the reader integrates new knowledge derived from the text with his or her background knowledge in a way that makes sense. This interactive process between text and the reader's background knowledge explains how readers can process text so rapidly" (Wade, 1990, p. 442-3). Many poor and at-risk readers lack sufficient background knowledge to build a base for the integration of old and new knowledge.

In addition to prior knowledge, students must develop a substantial reading

vocabulary in order to comprehend text. Vocabulary growth in elementary school students has received attention from a number of researchers today. Researchers have found that students with advanced oral language have little difficulty with primary grade reading materials. However, it is harder for children with limited vocabularies to use contextual, structural, and graphophonic cues when encountering unknown words in text (Robbins & Ehri, 1994).

Vocabulary instruction itself, has failed many students in past years. It has not increased reading comprehension measurably, according to Nagy (1988). He has discussed two ways that vocabulary instruction has failed. The first is that most instruction has failed to produce in-depth word knowledge. Reading comprehension requires a high level of word knowledge which is higher than the level achieved by many types of current instruction. Much of the current vocabulary instruction, according to Nagy, does not go beyond providing partial knowledge of the word or doesn't produce an in-depth knowledge of the word (1988). A second failure has been the redundancy of the text. According to Nagy, one does not need to know every word in a text to be able to understand the meaning. If a certain number of unfamiliar words in the text do not hinder comprehension then instruction in these words would not considerably improve comprehension (Nagy,1988).

Students who spend time reading tend to have more vocabulary knowledge. "After third grade, for those students who do read a reasonable amount, reading may be the single largest source of vocabulary growth" (Levin, 1990, p.11). A study found that the amount of free reading was the best predictor of vocabulary growth between grades two and five (Fielding, Wilson & Anderson, 1986, as cited in Levin, 1990). Unfortunately, many students do not spend time reading. It has been documented that boys between ages eight and ten rank outdoor sports first in terms of fun, while reading a book finished sixth. Girls the same age rank reading first and outdoor sports

second. Television has replaced daily reading for enjoyment purposes and obtaining information (Oppelt, 1991). This lack of free reading is directly correlated to limited growth in vocabulary knowledge.

Another factor that affects vocabulary achievement is communication in the home. "Vocabulary plays an important role in both communication effectiveness and academic success. This vocabulary development starts when parents read to children when they are very young" (Brooks, Hamann, Vetter, 1997, p.22). In addition, another factor that makes it difficult for students to interact with text and other students, is the lack of significant discussion or conversation within the home. This discussion could expand the students' vocabulary and increase their knowledge.

A rich vocabulary is a valuable asset and an important attribute of success in any walk of life, according to Warwick (1988). Vocabulary instruction cannot be taken for granted by the classroom teacher. As research has shown, this single factor can contribute greatly to improved reading comprehension and academic success. All the professional researchers cited in the preceding paragraphs and the on-site researcher agree that there are many possible causes for the students' limited vocabulary development. Limited English skills in the home affect how the student will learn and practice English at school. Families that do not focus on reading at home and do not become involved in the community lose out on opportunities to help their children improve. Vocabulary instruction in schools has generally not been as in-depth as it could be. Students are not performing at higher levels of thinking, so much of the current instruction has been merely superficial. As students grow and our world changes, more and more concepts are developed and each comes with its own set of specific vocabulary words. Students are faced with more abstractions in what they read and encounter in life. A deeper meaning of words is necessary to function. And finally, because of the changes in society, students are not developing the skills and

vocabulary necessary to interact with others. They are often isolated at home in front of the television instead of interacting with peers. Students do not see the importance of having a good vocabulary because they perceive that they have no need for one in their lives.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

It has been proven by experts that a lack of adequate vocabulary knowledge is an obvious and serious obstacle for many students and the number of students continue to grow. A review of the research reveals several factors concerning vocabulary instruction. Much of the current vocabulary instruction often fails to increase comprehension measurably, according to Nagy (1988). To be effective, vocabulary instruction should contain certain elements and be based on certain assumptions. A number of researchers have outlined various vocabulary programs to aide in effective instruction. A recently completed review of many vocabulary instruction studies indicates that vocabulary instruction generally does improve reading comprehension, but that not all methods work as well as others (Stahl, 1986). Most of these programs are based on similar beliefs. The process that a teacher follows must contain several characteristics.

There are several factors that influence reading comprehension such as background knowledge, motivation and text organization. Vocabulary is only one component but probably the most crucial one. Readers can miss the meaning of an entire passage if they do not have a deep understanding of key vocabulary terms. Word knowledge is a powerful predictor of how well a reader will understand the text. Superficial vocabulary knowledge or vocabulary instruction is insufficient to improve

reading comprehension. Therefore, instruction must be high quality with lasting effects.

The first quality of effective vocabulary instruction is that it must provide both adequate definitions and illustrations of how words are used in natural contexts (Nagy, 1988). Too many students are required to look up words in a dictionary as their only method of learning new words. Many dictionaries contain brief explanations that do not present the word in context. "Teaching solely through context may be quite helpful if the person already knows what the word means but it seldom supplies adequate information for the person who has no other knowledge about the meaning of the word" (Nagy, 1988, p.7). Dictionary activities must work in tandem with contextual ideas and lessons.

Good vocabulary instruction should also involve integration, repetition and meaningful use (Nagy, 1988). New words should be tied into familiar concepts and experiences for the students. "Many encounters with a new word are necessary if vocabulary instruction is to have a measurable effect on reading comprehension" (Stahl and Fairbanks, 1986 as cited in Nagy, 1988, p.23). The way that a teacher can provide multiple encounters with new words and keep instruction from becoming dull is through meaningful use of the words. "Vocabulary instruction that makes students think about the meaning of a word and demands that they do some meaningful processing of the word will be more effective than instruction that does not" (Nagy,1988, p.24). With the opportunity of multiple repetition about the word's meaning and providing multiple exposures of the word in different contexts, students' comprehension of the word should significantly be affected (Igelsrud,1991).

Carr and Wixon propose four guidelines for effective vocabulary instruction.

(1) Instruction should help students relate new vocabulary to their background knowledge. (2) Instruction should help students develop elaborated word

knowledge. (3) Instruction should provide for active student involvement in learning new vocabulary. (4) Instruction should develop students strategies for acquiring new vocabulary independently (Carr & Wixon, 1986, p.588).

Relating new vocabulary to previous experience helps vocabulary become personally meaningful to the student. This in turn, leads to increased reading comprehension, improved learning and retention of the meaning of the new words (Carr & Wixon, 1986). Instruction that involves the students helps them develop meaning beyond a singular context. Student-directed learning opportunities encourage thinking and reasoning skills while using new vocabulary. Activities such as these help with retention of new words. Haggard has developed the Vocabulary Self-Collection strategy which encourages students to find words in their own environment to learn (Haggard, 1986). Having students play a role in their learning is also something that Luckham (1991) advocates. She suggests that students create their own personal dictionary of words containing words of their choice. Various vocabulary activities are completed on the individually chosen words. The final consideration is that effective instruction should help students learn new vocabulary through individual work with a minimum of teacher involvement (Carr & Wixon, 1986). With the number of new words facing a mature reader, this characteristic becomes crucial to improved reading ability.

McNeil states that newer techniques for teaching vocabulary are based on four assumptions. The first is that words are constantly being redefined (McNeil, 1987). A young child will learn just one meaning of a word whereas mature readers will build on that initial meaning. This redefinition comes with developmental growth. The second assumption is that words have many meanings. This truth leads to the third assumption which is that the entire conceptual framework related to a word should be taught, not just the individual word (McNeil, 1987). Because words are used in a such

a variety of ways, it is important to understand the context that is associated with words. "One idea for teaching vocabulary so that it improves reading comprehension involves increasing the child's precision of word knowledge. Accordingly, words that share a common conceptual basis are taught together" (McNeil, 1987, p. 109). The fourth assumption is that when the conceptual meaning of a word is taught, the framework used should represent a hierarchy of terms. Teachers must help students connect the new word to related concepts (McNeil, 1987).

Although opportunities for vocabulary instruction are more pronounced in language arts and reading, vocabulary instruction properly belongs in all subject areas of the curriculum where learners encounter new words and concepts (Smith, 1997). Good vocabulary instruction needs to happen in science and social studies as well as language arts. As is suggested in research done by Wesche and Paribakht (1994), 'the minimum number of exposures for a word to be learned through reading is around ten and such learning is also dependent on other factors such as the presence of clear cues. Having many opportunities to encounter new words throughout the school day will have a significant impact on learning. Laffey and Laffey (1986) outline a method of using newspapers for instruction, a strategy that would work in many content areas. This is also promoted by Igelsrud (1991), who has used the comics as well as the newspaper for vocabulary instruction.

It becomes clear from this research that when actual vocabulary instruction takes place, there must be certain elements present in the lessons that will contribute to increased knowledge by the students. Good vocabulary instruction provides adequate definitions and illustrations of how words are used in natural contexts. It also involves integration, repetition and meaningful use of the words. Since words are constantly being redefined, students should be given instruction that builds on the initial meanings of words. It is also helpful to teach words within a conceptual

framework. Finally, vocabulary instruction belongs in all the content areas and should be taught by all teachers.

Instructional Methods

Once the previous mentioned elements have been defined and identified, the next task is to create intensive vocabulary instruction methods that will incorporate a number of these elements. The following will be a discussion of such methods.

The Frayer Model for attaining conceptual meaning of words was developed from work by Dorothy Frayer, Wayne Frederick and Herbert Klausmeir at the University of Wisconsin (McNeil, 1987). This model offers a systematic procedure for conceptualizing words. There are several steps involved in applying the model.

1. Discriminating the relevant qualities common to all instances of the concept. For example, the relevant attribute of *globe* is *spherical*.
2. Discriminating the relevant from the irrelevant properties of instances of the concept. For example, *large* or *small* is an irrelevant attribute for ***globe***.
3. Providing an example of the concept, such as a classroom globe.
4. Providing a non-example of he concept, such as a chart (nonspherical).
5. Relating the concept to a subordinate concept, such as *ball*.
6. Relating the concept to a superordinate term, such as *global*.
7. Relating the concept to a coordinate term, such as *map*

(McNeil, 1987, p. 116).

The Frayer model is very useful in preparing students for a reading assignment. The teacher can review an upcoming reading assignment and identify words that are new and necessary to the understanding of the material. Then, teacher and students together can go through the Frayer method. Eventually, students can navigate through this model individually once they understand the meaning of the word presented in the

literature selection. Charles Peters compared the reading comprehension of pupils who used conventional social studies textbooks and pupils instructed according to the Frayer model. "Both good and poor readers who used materials organized in accordance with the Frayer model comprehended better than comparable pupils who used materials with the conventional features of textbooks" (McNeil, 1987, p. 117).

Semantic Feature Analysis is a strategy to help acquaint students with the relationships among word meanings. This strategy is one that content area teachers can use to teach both the vocabulary and the concepts needed for comprehension. According to Anders and Bos, recommendation of its use is a radical departure from traditional vocabulary instruction in the content area (1986). This strategy is one that also activates students' prior knowledge (Irvin, 1990). This activity involves a two-dimensional matrix used to sort and categorize words. The words chosen should be from a semantically close group and should include some words that are already familiar to the students. As an example, one set of words could include *house, shack, mansion, shed, and tent*. These words would be used as labels for the rows in the matrix. The vertical columns are for the semantic features, or a phrase describing attributes that may or may not be shared by some of the words. For example, *for people, small, permanent and crude* are phrases that could be used. Once everything is labeled in the rows and columns, the teacher leads the students in discussion as to determine which attributes go with which words (Levin, 1990, Nagy, 1988).

The Semantic Feature Analysis is a strategy that is also an example of a graphic organizer. A graphic organizer is a visual recording of information into a specific organization or pattern to aide in recalling and internalizing the information. Many researchers promote the use of graphic organizers as pre- and post reading aids, as study strategies and as vocabulary development activities (Nagy, 1988). Graphic organizers are generally thought to be an effective way to introduce new

vocabulary before reading. By creating a visual connection, students are better able to arrange information and vocabulary hierarchically (Irvin, 1990). Visual methods of teaching vocabulary can offer students more opportunities to learn. A semantic map is one example of a graphic organizer. This organizer is used as a tool for relating new concepts to a child's background knowledge. An example of this is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Semantic map for City

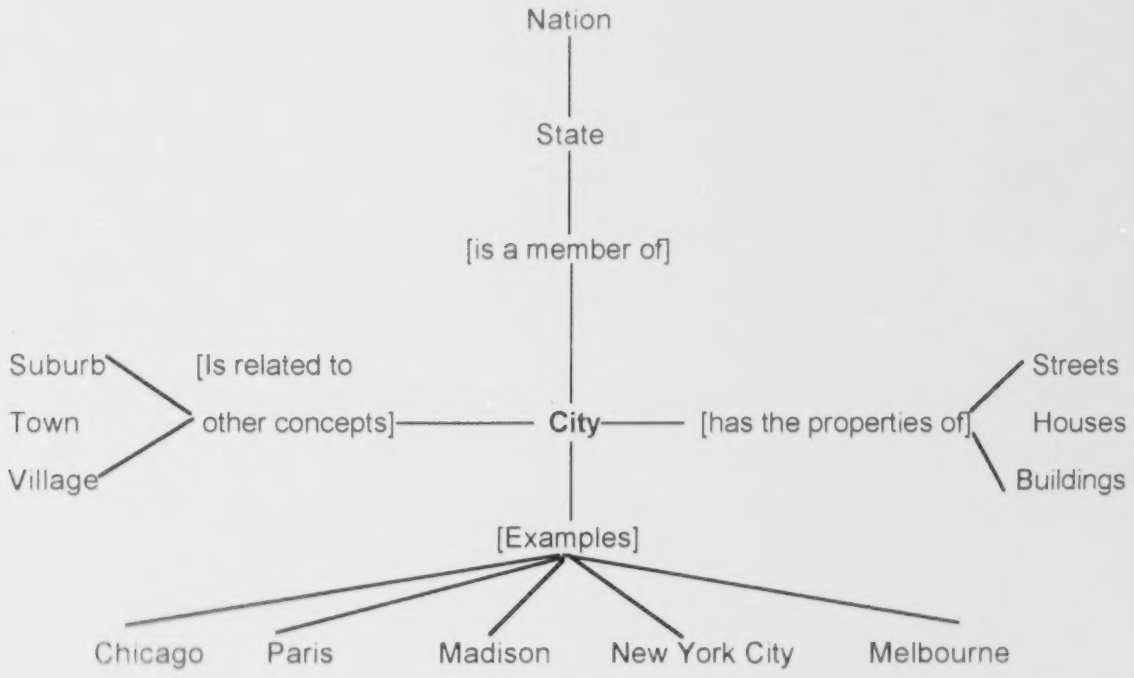

Figure 5. This shows a semantic map for the word, *city*. When introducing a word that is part of a larger concept, using a graphic organizer such as this one, helps students relate the new concept to what they already know. By viewing it set up in this

manner, it helps to internalize the new information.

Classroom teachers need to be aware of the latest technological advances to make the best use of available resources. Teaching new vocabulary through video, artwork and visual perception activities is highlighted in the research done by Bazeli and Olle. Activities involve students creating videos to teach or act out vocabulary, creating illustrated vocabulary books and utilizing published books to teach vocabulary (1995). One such book suggested is Animalia by Graeme Base. In addition, there are a number of excellent CD-ROMs devoted to vocabulary and reading instruction.

In research conducted by Nelson-Herber, she recommends intensive direct teaching of new vocabulary before reading (1985). Her model has been designed with three purposes in mind. "(1) it should help students expand their knowledge of vocabulary by building from the known to the new, (2) to help students refine their understanding of word meanings and the ways that words interrelate within concept clusters and (3) to support students in the use of their word power in reading, writing and speaking" (Nelson-Herber, 1985, p. 529). Nelson-Herber promotes teaching vocabulary by selecting and organizing clusters of words basic to the concept under consideration. These clusters are presented to the students in way that relates to their prior knowledge. Activities engage the students in constructing word meaning and small group discussions. Finally, expansion and refinement activities support the students in recognizing relationships and helping with application of the words (Nelson-Herber, 1985). One example of the need for teaching vocabulary in clusters becomes evident when teaching students about *photosynthesis*. Students can memorize a definition for *photosynthesis* but there is no way to understand the concept without understanding the meaning of *chlorophyll, oxygen, carbon dioxide, chloroplasis, glucose* and others. A student can memorize the definition for

economics, but true understanding requires a knowledge of *investment*, *production*, *employment*, *consumption* and *equilibrium*. Teaching the new vocabulary in clusters can help students see the relationship between the words and allow them to relate the new words to what they already know.

The research has shown that effective vocabulary instruction involves certain elements necessary to make the instruction the most beneficial to students. Reading comprehension can be improved by effective vocabulary instruction. In addition, reading vocabulary is also improved by more reading. Oppelt (1991) tells us that if we want children to learn to read and take delight in reading, we need to make their classroom environment rich in literary events as possible. Children need to see a reason for reading and finding personal meaning in stories. Students need to be immersed in books, writing and art materials and given time to listen and read stories. Most growth in vocabulary knowledge must come through reading. Vocabulary instruction alone can not provide students with enough experiences and enough words to learn. According to Nagy (1988), the most important thing a teacher can do to increase vocabulary growth is to increase the volume of students' reading. Nagy estimated that the average 5th grader spends about 25 minutes a day reading, when reading both in and out of school are taken into account (1988). An increase in this time would be a great advantage to both the student and the teacher. Warwick suggests that not all the increase be in the form of silent reading. The findings have indicated that much vocabulary acquisition does occur during the experience of listening to suitable stories read aloud to the class and that teachers' explanations add substantially to the level of acquisition (Warwick, 1988). Whether the student is reading silently or listening to a read aloud, the more this can take place in the classroom, the more it will benefit vocabulary acquisition.

There is clear evidence supporting the need for vocabulary instruction in

schools. The success of the reader depends on his/her understanding of the words presented. However, not all vocabulary instruction is beneficial. The experts agree that good vocabulary instruction contains many similar characteristics. Good instruction provides adequate definitions and presents the words in context. As children mature, the context of words can change and good instruction involves moving beyond a singular context. All researchers agreed that involving students in the learning process provided the most lasting effects. This was done by integrating vocabulary instruction and connecting it to the prior knowledge of the students. In addition, providing the student with multiple encounters with new vocabulary words helped to internalize the new concepts. Interactive lessons that require the students to use the new words seemed to garner the best results. Vocabulary is not isolated in just the language arts but is something that should be taught in all subject areas. Teachers that recognize this, give students more opportunities to learn new words and ideas.

The actual instructional methods used to teach vocabulary all have similar characteristics as well. Good instructional methods involve categorizing, organizing and prioritizing the new words. New vocabulary can be connected to visual images, such as graphic organizers, to help students recall and see the connections between words. Teaching words in clusters also helps students make sense of new concepts associated with specialized vocabulary. The use of technology is another tool for assisting in instruction. No matter what instructional methods are used, it is agreed upon by the experts that all good methods should help students connect new words to prior knowledge, refine the meanings of words based on the context they are presented in, and involve the learners in the process.

Project Outcomes and Solution Components

As a result of increased instructional emphasis on vocabulary acquisition and an increase in both silent and oral read alouds, during the period of September 1998 to January 1999, the fourth grade students from the targeted class will increase their vocabulary knowledge in reading and writing, as measured by the Gates-MacGinitie Reading test, pre and post testing, classroom activities and teacher review of student work.

In order to accomplish the project outcomes, the following processes were utilized. To begin the intervention, vocabulary word lists were created for the 16 weeks of the plan. Vocabulary activities were chosen to provide whole class instruction as well as individual work for each student. Read alouds by the teacher were increased each week as well as silent reading time for the students. Finally, various forms of assessment, including pretest, posttests, checklists and daily work were developed.

Project Action Plan

The following action plan was designed to implement weekly vocabulary activities centered around a weekly vocabulary word list to address the insufficient level of vocabulary knowledge of the targeted group of students. In addition, read aloud time and silent reading time was increased for all students each week. Some form of intervention took place five days a week for a minimum of 20 minutes. The targeted group of students consisted of 24 4th graders, grouped heterogeneously. The school district does not track or group for reading, so the group involved was the regular classroom assigned at the beginning of the school year. These students remained with the teacher for the entire day.

Baseline data was gathered the first two weeks of the plan. This involved giving

the students the vocabulary portion of the Gates-MacGinitie reading and vocabulary test. In addition, the students were given a copy of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey to complete. This gave the researcher information on how the students felt about reading and reading related activities in and out of school. This was also given at the end of the intervention to determine if their interest in reading had changed (see Appendix A for survey).

The next step involved creating weekly vocabulary word lists to use in class (See Appendix B for sample word lists). Some of the words were taken from various content areas and some were chosen based on teacher selection. Ten words were chosen each week and pre- and post tests were created to go along with most of the word lists. During some weeks, the words were introduced as part of the spelling curriculum and therefore, a pre- or post test was not necessary. In addition, students were given 20 minutes of silent reading time everyday and 30 minutes of read aloud time with discussion 2-3 times a week.

Once the word lists were created, the next step was the development of a five day lesson plan. The following is an outline of the plan that was used. The plan varied slightly from week to week depending on outside influences during reading.

Monday

1. Give vocabulary pretest on 10 preselected words or if presented in spelling, give spelling test on the 10 vocabulary words
2. Discuss words with students, giving definitions and contextual information
3. Twenty minutes of silent reading
4. Thirty minutes of teacher read aloud with discussion

Tuesday

1. Choose one activity from the selection of teacher directed activities and do with the class
2. Twenty minutes of silent reading

Wednesday

1. Choose 1 individual vocabulary activity for students to complete on their own
2. Twenty minutes of silent reading
3. Thirty minutes of teacher read aloud with discussion - because of an inconsistent schedule, this happened every other Wednesday

Thursday

1. Review meanings of vocabulary words using teacher directed activity
2. Twenty minutes of silent reading

Friday

1. Take vocabulary posttest or final spelling test
2. Record words for the week and hang them on a large chart to be hung in the room
3. Twenty minutes of silent reading
4. Thirty minutes of teacher read aloud with discussion

This intervention was designed to increase student's vocabulary through a variety of teaching methods and increases in both silent and oral reading time in the classroom. The teaching activities for presenting the vocabulary were selected from what the current research indicated was best. The following activities were all considered:

a. Semantic Feature Analysis
b. Frayer method
c. Graphic organizers

d. Vocabulary cards

e. Acting out the words

f. Semantic mapping

g. Discussion based activities

h. Dictionary work in conjunction with contextual discussion

i. Video making

j. Artwork

k. Visual perception activities

Methods of Assessment

The data collection methods used in order to assess the effects of the intervention included the Gates-MacGinitie Reading test, a reading interest inventory, weekly vocabulary pre- and post-tests, and a variety of student work.

Students were given the vocabulary portion of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading test and the reading interest inventory before the intervention began. These were both given again at the end of the intervention to determine if the intervention was successful and to see if attitudes in reading have improved. A log was kept by the researcher throughout the intervention to document successes, failures and changes that were made during the intervention.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve both students' vocabulary knowledge and attitudes toward reading through weekly vocabulary lessons and increased silent and oral reading times. The targeted classroom was comprised of 23 fourth grade students.

To begin the plan, students were given the Gates-MacGinitie Vocabulary test. This served as base line data in the area of vocabulary. In addition, the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was given to determine students' attitudes toward reading, both in school and at home. Weekly vocabulary lists, consisting of ten words were developed. Words were chosen from the content areas as well as the student's own writing. These words were presented either as part of the weekly spelling program or as separate vocabulary lists. Examples of these lists can be found in Appendix C. Twenty minutes a day of silent reading time was added to the daily schedule and 2 -3 half hour periods of read-aloud time was implemented each week.

The weekly lessons followed a predicable pattern each week. On Monday, the students took a vocabulary pretest or a spelling pretest, depending on the type of list presented. Original plans called for vocabulary lessons on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, but this was changed to just twice a week due to schedule changes. On Tuesday and Thursday, vocabulary lessons were presented to the children. These

lessons took various forms, utilizing some of the ideas presented in chapter three. One of the lessons each week was one done as a whole class and directed by the teacher. An example of some of these type of lessons were Semantic Mapping, Semantic Feature Analysis and the Frayer Method. The other lesson was more student directed and one that the students were able to complete independently. Examples of this type of activity were vocabulary cards, group work using dictionaries and the use of CD-ROMs. On Friday, a post-test was given to see if students had learned the words. The words were then written on large paper and posted in the room. Each week, another list of words was added to the wall, creating a visual reminder of the vocabulary words that were taught.

Vocabulary cards were one example of the type of lesson that students could complete on their own. An example of this activity is in Appendix D. Of the ten vocabulary words that were chosen for that week, each student chose three words to use. Each vocabulary card consisted of a piece of 8 1/2" x 11" paper, folded into thirds. With the folds going crosswise, the paper was divided into three even sections. In the top section, the students wrote the selected word. In the middle section, the word was defined, used in a good sentence and the part of speech was identified. In the bottom section went an illustration of the word. This was completed for the three selected words. After this was done, the students were grouped so that all of the vocabulary words were represented in their group. They then proceeded to share their cards and teach each other the vocabulary words. This activity helped to reinforce the words and it created a visual activity for the students. The cards were then left in class for students to use in their free time.

Since research has stated that increased reading time improves vocabulary knowledge, twenty minutes a day of silent reading was implemented into the schedule. The students needed to be reading silently this whole time and were monitored by the

instructor. During the last two minutes of silent reading time, the students needed to share with a partner what they had just read. Partners varied from day to day, but all students were required to share. In addition, on Mondays, Fridays, and every other Wednesday, oral reading by the instructor was also added to the schedule. This was time for the instructor to read aloud from teacher selected books. These books were trade books; generally Newbery Award winners. The books were usually a higher reading level than fourth grade and of a high interest to the students. The instructor paused often to discuss the reading material and new vocabulary words. Words from the read-aloud books were often chosen to be part of the weekly vocabulary lists. Written projects and activities were not part of the read-aloud time, but class discussion was included in this time.

Since vocabulary was so prominent in the classroom, students were more aware of new words. As part of reading work, students began writing down new words they encountered in their reading. Many of these words were used for the various vocabulary activities throughout the intervention.

Various strategies were taught to the students to help them navigate through content related reading material. The purposes of these strategies were identification of new vocabulary words and being able to use context clues to decipher meaning. The more these strategies were utilized, the easier it became for students to handle content area reading material.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

The focus of this action research project was to improve vocabulary knowledge and attitudes toward reading. To assess the changes that took place during the intervention, this researcher used a variety of activities and tools that measured the students' vocabulary knowledge and interest in reading. A variety of daily activities that had a major impact on the results were also done although their effects were not

quantifiable. Quantitative data was gathered through the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, the Gates-MacGinitie reading test and weekly pre- and post- vocabulary tests. Qualitative data was found through the form of student work samples, student interviews, class discussions and teacher observations. A detailed description of the intervention, results and analysis of results follows.

The students began this intervention by taking the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (Appendix A) to determine their interest in reading in the areas of school, home and leisure. Initially, 23 students took this survey, including the 2 students who received reading services through the special education department. This survey was again given at the end of the intervention to determine if any change in attitude toward reading had occurred during the time of the intervention. At this time, only 22 students took this survey, as one child had moved. The intervention lasted longer than the time frame originally prescribed. The month of December was filled with testing as the Stanford Achievement tests were given at this time. There were also numerous schedule changes that caused the researcher to stop the intervention temporarily. In addition, there was a winter break for two weeks. The intervention was continued in January and through most of February, to make up for the lost time. As a result, this survey was given at the beginning of March. The comparison results of the survey are shown in Figures 6, 7 and 8.

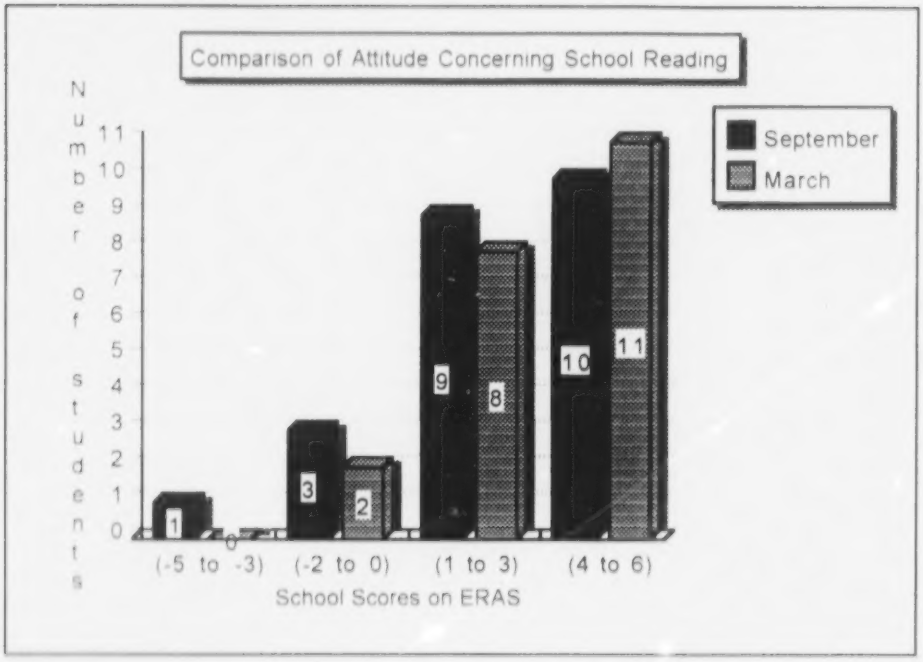

Figure 6. A comparison of the number of students that scored in each range on the School portion of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey.

The results of this comparison show an increase in positive attitude related to reading in school. This does not take into account the work related to reading. That will be addressed in Figure 8. This section refers to just the act of reading in school. This can include student or teacher selected materials as well as fiction and non-fiction types of books. In September, 82% of the students scored in the positive range on this portion of the survey. After retesting in March, 90% of the students now scored in the positive range. This increase may be due to the fact that the act of reading was more enjoyable to the students after the interventions. When a child can understand what he/she reads, the task does not seem so daunting. Also, part of the intervention was to include 20 minutes a day of free reading for the students. This was viewed as a most enjoyable part of the day. More on this topic will be discussed later.

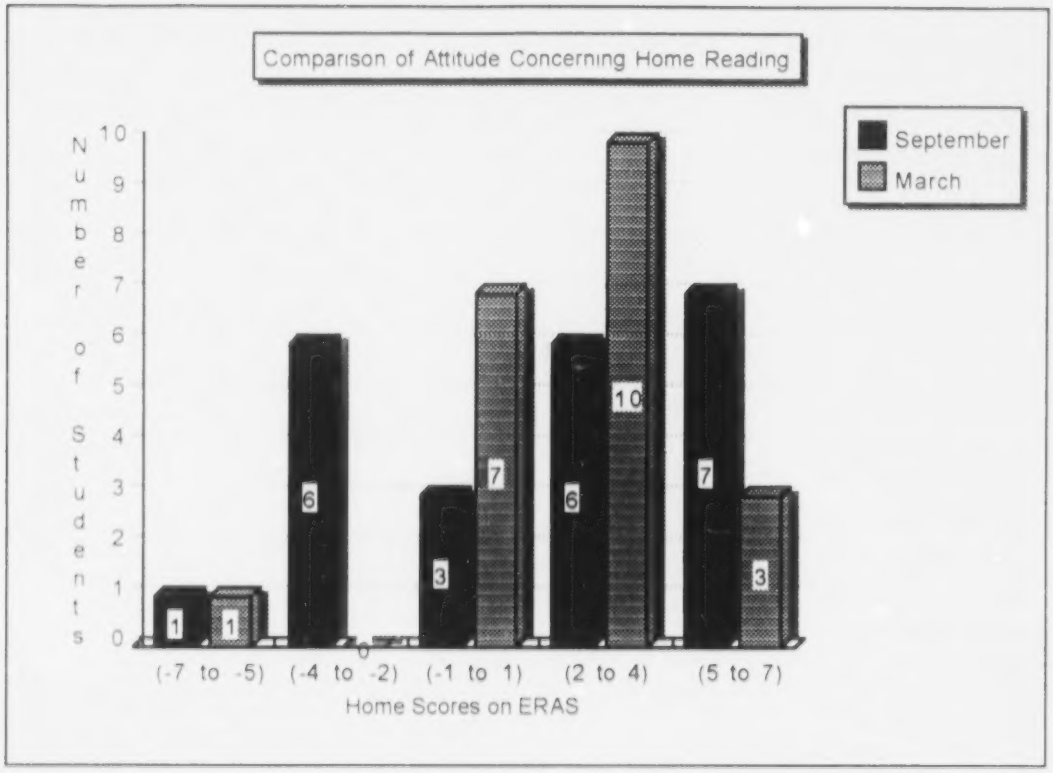

Figure 7. A comparison of the number of students that scored in each range on the Home portion of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey.

This section of the survey deals with reading at home or recreational reading. When this survey was first given in September, 43% of the students scored a 1 or below. Almost half the class was in the negative range when asked about their attitude toward reading at home. After giving this survey again in March, that figure dropped to 38% scoring a 1 or below. More of the students were clustered in the higher end of the chart. In September, 56% of the class was clustered in this area as compared to 62% in March. This does show that there was an increase in positive attitude toward reading at home. This is surprising since home can offer many more distractions to keep students from reading. It is difficult for a book to compete with television, sports, after-school activities and family time. This researcher was

surprised to find an increase in this area. Again, it may have been due to an increase in student ability which could have produced greater enjoyment during the act of reading.

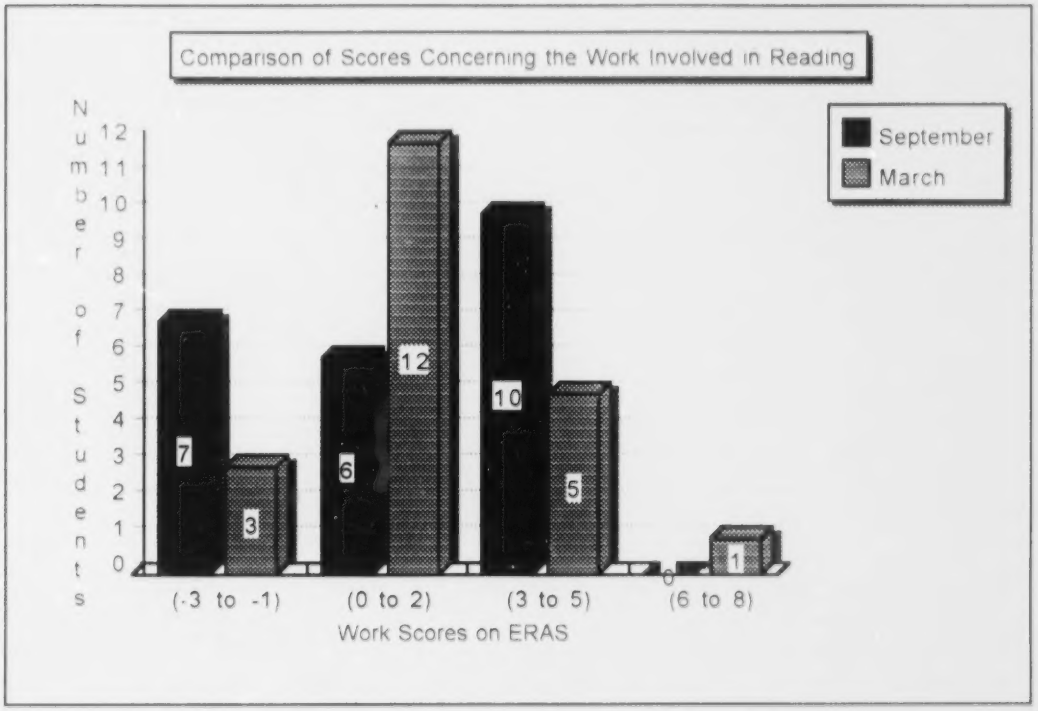

Figure 8. A comparison of the number of students that scored in each range on the Work portion of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey.

This survey dealt with work associated with reading. That work could take the form of questions and answers, workbook pages, reports, etc. When given in September, 56% of the students scored in the negative to low range in this area. Those results were not surprising at the time. While many students might express an interest in reading, not many express that same interest in completing work associated activities with reading. When looking at the survey given again in March, there was a

noticeable difference in the number of students scoring in the positive range of numbers. In September, 70% of the students scored in this range. In March, 86% of the students scored here. An additional column needed to be added for the March results. While it is safe to say that students probably like the work related to reading the least, this survey showed that the attitude expressed towards this work did improve. Again, this may have related to the students being better able to read the material and understand the assignments. When looking at the combined parts of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, there was an obvious change in attitude. More students scored in the positive ranges when the survey was given again in March than they did during the original survey in September. This increase in overall attitude may have reflected a more confident group of students. It appears that as vocabulary knowledge increased, students' own perception of their abilities increased as well.

Determining attitudes toward reading was just one portion of the data collected. In addition to the survey, a portion of the Gates MacGinitie Reading test was given again. Form K of the the vocabulary portion was given in September and then Form L of the same test was given in February. Figure 9 shows a comparison of the results of these two tests.

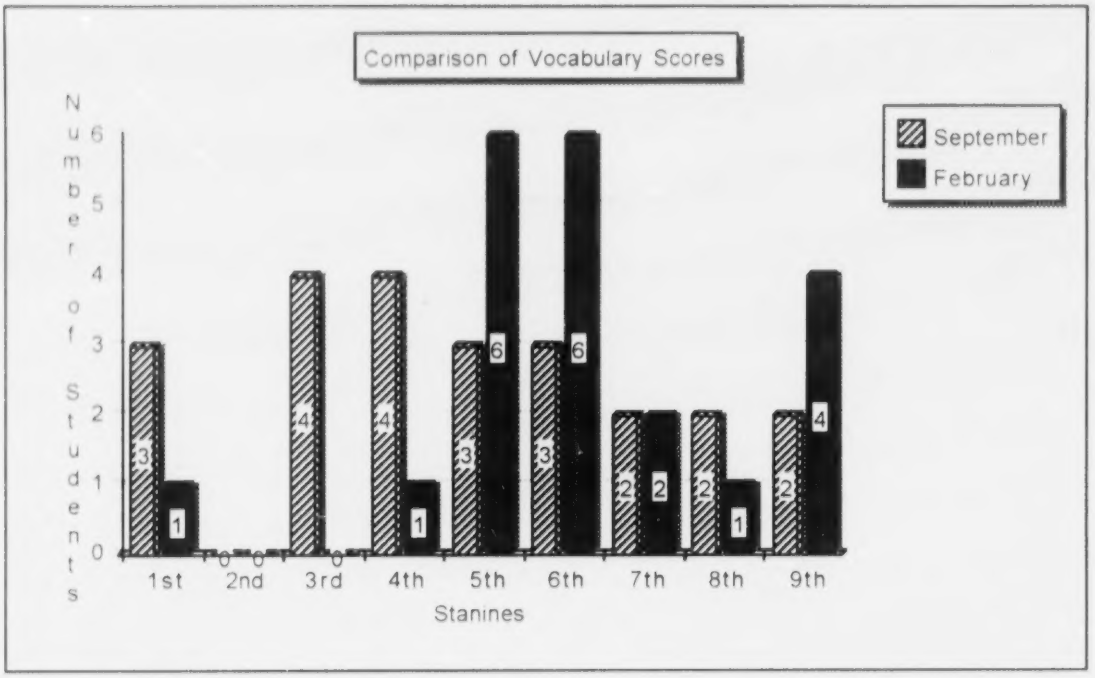

Figure 9. A comparison of the number of students that scored in each stanine on the vocabulary portion of the Gates MacGinitie Reading test.

This vocabulary test was a clear measurement of vocabulary improvement. When Form K of this test was given in September, 52% of the students scored in the 5th stanine or above. During the same testing, 13% of the students scored in the lowest stanine. This range is reflective of a typical bell curve that may occur with a normal distribution. When Form L of the test was given in March, there was a shift in scores. At this time, 90% of the students scored in the 5th stanine or above and only 4% of the students scored in the lowest stanine. These results seem to have come about because of an increase in direct vocabulary instruction. During the intervention, students were introduced to 10 new words a week. This was done for 18 weeks. That was a total of 180 new words that were systematically introduced, taught, reinforced and tested. While that number is relatively small compared to the number of words

that students encounter, this approach appeared to make a difference. Lessons were structured each week so that the students took either a pretest or a spelling test on the designated words, worked on a teacher directed vocabulary activity, completed an independent activity and then took a final test on the words. Chapter 3 outlined the weekly plan for teaching the vocabulary words.

Silent and oral reading times were added to the weekly schedule as well. Each day, 20 minutes was set aside for students to read silently. This began with students choosing books from the classroom library, reading for 5 minutes and then getting up to select a new book. There was much movement and talking as the students struggled to find a book and stay focused. After a week of this, the researcher talked with the class to determine rules for silent reading time. As a group, the following rules were created:

1. Silent reading time must be silent.
2. Get enough reading material to keep you at your seat for 20 minutes.
3. You may sit anywhere you like as long as you respect others.
4. You may have a healthy snack during silent reading time.

Once these rules were created, the class had a guideline to follow and silent reading time became more productive. It was also noticed by the researcher that as time went on, students were more apt to select one book and stay with it for a week or so as opposed to selecting a new book each day. As a result, students were reading more and completing more books. After a month of silent reading, a sharing time was added for the last two minutes. Students needed to find a partner and share something that they had just read. This was very successful, as students would keep going back to the same partner to find out what had happened in the book. More students were choosing to read books that they had heard about during silent reading time. Conversations about books went on past the silent reading time as students were

interested in discussing what they had read. Overall, silent reading time turned out to be a very successful and fulfilling part of the school day.

Oral reading by the teacher was also added to the weekly schedule. Initially, this researcher wanted to include oral reading every day, but this did not work out. Three days a week was the most that could be managed. The books used during read-aloud time were teacher selected. Students greatly enjoyed this time and would eagerly await it each week. Read-aloud also consisted of discussion and was used as an opportunity to introduce new words. As this time went on, students would try to identify previously taught vocabulary words in the reading. It was like a game for them to listen for the words. Since many of the books chosen were examples of good literature, there were many opportunities to talk about new words.

The combination of silent reading and read-aloud time benefited the students in many ways. As research suggested, the more students read, the more they are exposed to new words. Daily silent reading in addition to their regularly scheduled reading lessons increased the amount of time that students read. Oral reading provided students with a forum to discuss new words and ideas. Since many of the words introduced in the vocabulary lessons were common words, they often showed up in their reading or in discussion. This gave students the opportunity to have multiple exposures to these words. In addition to the weekly vocabulary lessons, silent and oral reading appeared to help students increase their vocabulary knowledge.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data concerning academic achievement in the area of vocabulary development, the students showed marked growth in both vocabulary knowledge and attitudes toward reading. It was found that focusing on a specific word list each week helped students to really learn those words. Direct teaching of those vocabulary words resulted in steady growth in vocabulary by

the students. When students were given multiple opportunities to work with the chosen words each week, they seemed to retain the words longer and begin to identify them in their own reading. Posting the words on charts around the classroom gave students a visual reminder of the words and helped to keep them in their memory. Providing daily silent reading opportunities increased the amount of time that students read and appeared to have improved their enjoyment of reading. Oral reading by the teacher gave more opportunities for the students to hear new words in the context of good literature. It also gave students the chance to discuss ideas and predictions. This seems to have helped the students gain confidence in their own abilities and translate into a better attitude toward reading in both school and home.

Focusing on increasing vocabulary knowledge carried over into other areas as well. As students became aware of more words, they began making more connections such as finding synonyms and antonyms. When a new word came up, they would recall one taught that was either similar in meaning or opposite in meaning to the new word. They also began substituting better words for overused words in class. An example of this was when the researcher used the word "stuff" and the students were quick to offer other word choices in its place.

Based on the above findings, this researcher would like to make the following recommendations to future researchers. This researcher recommends teaching vocabulary in a very systematic way, as outlined in this paper. Leaving vocabulary to chance or assuming that students will learn on their own is quite risky. There were a number of times when knowledge of a word or words was assumed by the researcher, only to discover that the majority of students had incorrect information. It is also recommended that students be exposed to many different styles of vocabulary instruction. Since students learned in different ways, just one method of teaching could not get the results desired. A number of kinesthetic activities, such as charades,

were what the students remembered the most from the vocabulary lessons. Additionally, the visual reminders on the wall proved to be a great source for the students. If they recalled learning the word, they would often check the wall to see it and remind them of the meaning. In addition, the students were more apt to use the words in their writing, since they were visually available for them.

Some of the activities chosen to teach the new words were not always appropriate for this selected group of children. One example of this was the Frayer Method of teaching new vocabulary words. This method involved relating the new word to various concepts such as a non-example of the word and a subordinate of the word. At the fourth grade level, these concepts were too abstract for the students and, in this researchers opinion, caused students to be more confused about the new words than before the lesson. A modified form of the Frayer Method was used with some success. This involved identifying the new word, giving an example of the word, identifying a word that was similar and giving characteristics of the word.

In addition, some of the activities required more time than was originally designated for this intervention. Initially, 20 -25 minutes a day was going to be devoted to vocabulary instruction. Most of the activities required closer to 40 minutes to complete and some required more. This was especially true of the teacher directed activities, such as the Semantic Feature Analysis. This was a grid that involved identifying new words in clusters and then the characteristics of those words. This process involved much group discussion. A number of activities had to be carried over to the next day for completion. As time went on, vocabulary words were chosen from the existing curriculum so that there were opportunities in place to discuss and use these words in other curricular areas. On example of this was words relating to math concepts. Aside from the weekly vocabulary lessons, these words were also used in the math lessons for that week.

Since a number of students in the targeted population were not native speakers and learned English as a second language, special problems did present themselves. These students did not have the same background knowledge that most of the other students possessed. When relating a new word to ideas that were similar, often times the researcher made assumptions that were not true. In one case, the researcher was teaching the word, "display." A reference was made to museum displays and most of the students understood the connection. However, a number of students that were new to the country had never been to a museum. To associate a new word to a concept that was unknown to them, only made the word more confusing.

In addition, dictionaries proved to be difficult for these students to use. The meanings were abstract and examples were few. What seemed to work best was giving many examples of the word in many different forms. Acting out vocabulary words was an excellent way to show meaning. Drawing pictures, using CD-Rom programs and anything with graphics seemed to help the most. Teacher discussion was also very helpful. The researcher learned not to assume anything, but described in detail all the words. This led to many lessons designed just to build background knowledge.

Many of the words that were studied were words with more than one meaning. In younger grades, students learned the simpler meaning. One example of this was the word, "harbor." Most of the students knew the meaning to be where a boat is docked. The meaning that was taught during the intervention was to give shelter to someone. Students that spoke English as their first language were already familiar with the word harbor and it's more common meaning. The non-native speakers had to be taught the word harbor first. This extra teaching did help all the students, and certainly the non-native speakers as well.

Overall, this intervention was successful. Students did improve in vocabulary

knowledge and in their attitudes toward reading. It was important to have a well-defined plan with activities clearly in place. It was also important to be flexible about the lessons. One or two well taught lessons were better than four rushed lessons in a week. It was also clear to this researcher not to assume anything. This pertained to both the native and non-native speakers in the class. The advantages of this intervention could not all be measured by surveys and test results. In addition to those results, students appeared more connected to their learning and expressed a greater interest in school related activities. These type of results are difficult to measure but are often beneficial to the students' school career.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
ELEMENTARY READING ATTITUDE SURVEY

Circle one number for each statement. 1=positive 2=undecided 3=negative

1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?	1	2	3
2. How do you feel about reading in school for free time?	1	2	3
3. How do you feel about reading at home for fun?	1	2	3
4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?	1	2	3
5. How do you feel about starting a new book?	1	2	3
6. How do you feel about spending time reading over summer vacation?	1	2	3
7. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?	1	2	3
8. How do you feel about going to a book store?	1	2	3
9. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?	1	2	3
10. How do you feel when the teacher asks you about what you read?	1	2	3
11. How do you feel about doing worksheets in reading?	1	2	3
12. How do you feel about reading from school text books?	1	2	3
13. How do you feel about learning from a book?	1	2	3
14. How do you feel about taking a reading test?	1	2	3
15. How do you feel about using a dictionary?	1	2	3
16. How do you feel when asked to read aloud?	1	2	3
17. How do you feel when it is time for reading class?	1	2	3
18. How do you feel about the books you have read in reading class?	1	2	3
19. How do you feel about reading instead of watching television?	1	2	3
20. How do you feel about learning new words in reading?	1	2	3

APPENDIX B

Sample Word Lists

List 1	List 2
excited	parent
happy	jealous
delighted	terrified
jovial	bashful
cheerful	confident
depressed	determined
lonely	neice
awful	nephew
hopeless	grandparents
ghastly	exhausted

List 3	List 4
ominous	descend
civilized	prod
kimono	illuminate
forage	saunter
catastrophic	swagger
exposure	ascend
fumigate	emerge
lathering	disgust
scamper	disown
contentment	beverage

APPENDIX C

1. Excited
____ to be eager and interested
____ to leave something out
____ to be nervous about something

2. Happy
____ to have no feelings about something
____ to feel pleased and contented
____ to feel unorganized

3. Delighted
____ having new lights installed
____ enjoying an event
____ extreme pleasure about something

4. Jovial
____ someone who has good luck
____ someone who enjoys talking and laughing with other people
____ someone who works hard at their job

5. Cheerful
____ to be quiet and studious
____ to be intelligent and talkative
____ to be happy and full of life

6. Depressed
____ to feel sad or gloomy
____ to feel unorganized
____ to feel pleasure about an event

7. Lonely
____ to be working hard
____ to be without a job
____ to be sad because you are by yourself

8. Awful
____ anything or anyone that is unpleasant
____ to be full of awe
____ to be lost or confused

9. Hopeless
____ to be without a sense of humor
____ to be without expectations or wishes
____ to be without friends

10. Ghastly
____ having to do with ghosts
____ so bad that you can hardly face up to the situation
____ a haunted house

APPENDIX D
Sample Sheet For Vocabulary Cards

Word

Definition
Sentence
Part of Speech

Colorful
Illustration